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November 13, 2008

Mr. Paul A. Schneider
Deputy Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Re: FEMA/USCG IAA HSFELA-X-0377;
USCG Command and Control Personnel
Removal of Marine Debris from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita

Dear Mr. Schneider:

I am writing to request your assistance in modifying the administration of the above captioned IAA to allow the USCG to discontinue discriminating between marine debris resulting from Hurricanes Gustav/Ike versus that of Katrina/Rita.

By September 1, 2008, the Coast Guard had nearly completed identifying eligible debris in over 300 Louisiana waterways located in 20 of 22 parishes eligible for the FEMA/USCG Marine Debris Removal Program for Louisiana. Subsequent to Gustav/Ike, field assessments by state personnel, in collaboration with USCG survey teams, indicated that the 2008 storms had only added about 15% to the overall number of targets and volume of materials previously identified. Most of the new debris is located in or near waterways previously identified for the Katrina/Rita program and some of it is comingled.

We believe that the requested modification would not result in material changes in the Coast Guard's scope of work, its administrative burdens, or the duration of its mission. Indeed, not having to discriminate between older and newer items may simplify managing the process for all parties; especially where the newer obstructs access to the older.

The Coast Guard's contracting officer has informed us that she is finalizing her bid packages for coast-wide debris removal, with work to begin around mid-January; so, it is timely to include Gustav/Ike items.

It is our understanding that FEMA is in agreement with the policy of not requiring the USCG to discriminate between debris items from the two sets of storms. Not doing so will result in additional costs to taxpayers for duplicate mobilization and administration; two programs removing the same kinds of debris, in the same locations, at the same time is clearly inefficient and will generate additional burdens on the state and parish administrators working alongside the Coast Guard.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Respectfully,

Paul W. Rainwater
Director

cc: Jim Stark, LA TRO